

## **“Notes on *Sprezzatura*: Current Influences on Italian Jazz.”**

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**Abstract:** Italians have a certain “*Sprezzatura*” when it comes to art, and jazz in particular - “an effortless mastery, a discreet modesty, accomplishment mixed with unaffectedness.” This paper examines the accomplishments of some of today’s top Italian jazz musicians and uses some personal accounts to try to extrapolate the exact recipe for the “*Sprezzatura*” in jazz. Stefano Battaglia, Franco Santarnecchi, Enrico Rava, and Alessio Riccio are just a few Italian jazz musicians that embody the “effortless, unaffected modesty,” whether on stage, in a classroom or during an interview. At the same time, Italians maintain a hallowed respect for the American-born tradition; Enrico Rava recently performed an entire concert of arranged Michael Jackson songs, while Stefano Battaglia produced a CD of Alec Wilder compositions. Italy is a country divided geographically, socially, ideologically, and familiarly, a factor that seems to drive groups to carry-out business underground. It may be an attitude long-ingrained in Italian culture, but could this be why the jazz scene seems to thrive in underground circles? Could the “discreetness” be attributed to a country divided?

According to Francesco Martinelli, jazz writer and festival coordinator, “Italian government has little influence on Italian life.” If anything, the government makes it harder for good music to shine through to the public. Independent jazz schools struggle to stay afloat while unqualified pop musicians are invited by government-run programs to perform consistently to large audiences. How, then, do top “jazzistas” in Italy find the inspiration and drive to continue to lead, create and innovate in the jazz world? Is it because of the numerous annual jazz festivals, or the promise that being a great musician might present the opportunity to escape from Italy? With the recent immigration crisis in Europe, the economic instability has only worsened the divide; I will also attempt to highlight some of these latest events and how they are influencing the Italian jazz scene.